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**MEMORANDUM**

TO: TOWN BOARD, TOWN OF RAMAPO

FROM: JONATHAN LOCKMAN, AICP, PRINCIPAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNER  
ON BEHALF OF ROSA 4 ROCKLAND, INC. c/o DEBORAH MUNITZ

SUBJECT: COMMENTS REGARDING PUBLIC HEARING ON DGEIS DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENT, AUGUST 19, 2019 AT 7PM AT RAMAPO TOWN HALL, FOR THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:

1. PROPOSED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENTS FOR THE NORTHEAST RAMAPO DEVELOPMENT PLAN;
2. PROPOSED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE OF TOWN-WIDE EXISTING CONDITIONS;
3. PROPOSED TOWN CODE AMENDMENTS FOR NORTHEAST RAMAPO

DATE: AUGUST 19, 2019

CC: MAX STACH, AICP, STUART TURNER FAICP, NELSON, POPE & VOORHIS

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We have reviewed the following materials submitted for the Town of Ramapo Town Board SEQRA Public Scoping Session on August 19, 2019, for the preparation of this memorandum:

- Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS) Draft Scoping Document, for Comprehensive Plan Amendment for the Northeast Ramapo Development Plan, Comprehensive Plan Update of Town-Wide Existing Conditions, and Code Amendments for Northeast Ramapo; Project Sponsor & Lead Agency- Town of Ramapo Town Board, dated July 11, 2019.
- Northeast Ramapo Strategic Plan (2019) Power Point Presentation, by Laberge Group & Dover, Kohl & Partners, dated 1-23-19.
- Overview Map, Town of Ramapo, by Laberge Group, undated.
- FEAF Part 3 with attached narrative, for "Town of Ramapo: 2018095," signed by David Gilmore AICP, dated 7-11-19.
- Resolution of SEQR Positive Declaration, Approval of Draft Scoping Outline, and Scheduling Public Scoping Session Concerning Comprehensive Plan Amendments and Town Code Amendments," dated July 11, 2019.
- Notice, Town of Ramapo Town Board SEQR Positive Declaration, Approval of Draft Scoping Outline, and Scheduling Public Scoping Session Concerning Comprehensive Plan Amendments and Town Code Amendments, for Public Scoping Session on August 19, 2019, notice dated July 17, 2019.

**Background and Context of the Proposed Scoping Session**

The actions which are the subject of this SEQR DGEIS Public Scoping Session as stated in the notice include: 1) Comprehensive Plan Amendments for the Northeast Ramapo Development Plan; 2) a Comprehensive Plan update of Town-wide Existing Conditions; and 3) Town Code Amendments for Northeast Ramapo.



During the Comprehensive Plan Update, it is important to figure out what worked and didn't work after the 2004 Comp Plan recommendations were made, before making any new recommendations. Once the past Plan Implementation is evaluated and a Plan Update is developed, separate SEQR processes should be established to review drafts – considering the Comp Plan Update and any set of attendant Code Changes as two separate Type 1 actions.

Each of these steps will be complex in a dynamic and complex community as the Town of Ramapo, to be considered in sequence: First the Comprehensive Plan; and then the Proposed Code Amendments to Implement the Comprehensive Plan Update. Merging the two steps into one Type 1 action muddies the waters, and limits opportunities for thorough review and participation by the public.

The hearing tonight is different than most SEQRA hearings on a draft scoping document, as typically the proposed action is well-developed and framed, before a Positive Declaration is issued by the lead agency. As there simply are no draft comprehensive plan or code amendments prepared yet for which potential impacts can be evaluated, commenting on this draft DGEIS scope is premature and difficult. Nonetheless, ***we appreciate the opportunity to provide input on the Town's comprehensive plan update process, even though we believe this step proposed tonight is out of the proper sequence.***

#### Comments on Proposed Scoping Document

1. The proposed action has been classified as Type 1, and a Positive Declaration (POS DEC) has been issued by the Lead Agency, the Town Board. The proposed action is described as having three parts:
  - a. Comprehensive Plan Amendments for the Northeast Ramapo Development Plan
  - b. Comprehensive Plan Update of Town-wide Existing Conditions
  - c. Code Amendments for Northeast Ramapo

***However, there is no action here to review, so the SEQR Positive Declaration has been issued in error.***

There is no draft of the Comprehensive Plan Amendments available for the public to read. There is no update of town-wide existing conditions, nor is there any draft of Code Amendments. The lead agency cannot discuss with the public how to evaluate impacts of a these actions, when no proposed actions are front of us to look at. Therefore, the EAF form set submitted is invalid, as there are no draft documents upon which those answers to the questions can be based.

2. Before a scoping session is held on how to develop this Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement, the Town Board should take the results of the Northeast Ramapo Charette work conducted last winter and produce a draft Comprehensive Plan. We would recommend that a comprehensive plan committee be formed, as it appears that the Town Board does not have the time to supervise the work. A complete set of draft comp plan amendments and proposed new code draft documents should be completed before a new FEAF part 1 form is developed, as the answers to the questions must be based on a specific action proposal. ***If the Town Board is looking for input on what amendments to make to the Comp Plan and Codes, it should continue with the Charette public input process and a comprehensive plan committee process to develop draft recommendations.*** The charette was restricted to the Northeast Plan Area and there was no discussion regarding problems with existing plans or codes.
3. It appears that this three-part action was classified as Type 1 too early, as the creation of these amendments and updates have not started. (Only design charettes have been conducted. Only the power point from the January 23, 2019 charrette is available for review.) No draft documents have been prepared and posted for the above three parts of the proposed action. ***We cannot assume that the***



such specificity, it is impossible to develop a scope that a traffic engineer could follow, other than assessing existing conditions throughout the entire area.

- d. A housing study including issues of affordability and opportunities for both renting and owning homes should be included. ROSA 4 Rockland is concerned that most multifamily units recently developed are designed as condominiums.
- e. The Comprehensive Plan update should address the fiscal impacts of various types of housing on the Town's budget, as well as on school district funding. Before the Town assumes that higher densities will help expand the tax base, the issues need to be modeled and studied.
- f. An assessment of codes enforcement and problems with existing codes should be added, so that existing issues can be improved. For instance, ROSA 4 Rockland is concerned with the "bedroom" definition that limits the RSH zoning district to 2-bedrooms. The Zoning codes need to have a sharper focus on the number of bedrooms in proposed units, as well as on the overall unit densities that are established for each district.
- g. A study should be done for the Town Board and the public regarding the housing equity impacts of New York tax assessment rules that highly favor the development of condominiums, and examine how these rules affect development projects. Perhaps the Town needs to consider implementing open space development code.
- h. A study should be included to examine the impact of passing the New York Multifamily code.
- i. The Comprehensive Plan update should address the impacts of the proposed Columbia Gas/Millennium Pipeline as it passes through the Town of Ramapo.

11. Comments on Scoping Document Section 6.0 Alternatives. Typically, in this section a series of several alternatives to the proposed action are provided, including a "no action" alternative. Often the EIS alternatives serve to reinforce the chosen action as having the least impact, or to demonstrate options that might have similar or worse impacts than the chosen action. In this case, a particular plan and code amendment set for Northeast Ramapo have not been made, and section 8 rather lays out a variety of possible planning approaches to be developed and does not consider a "no action alternative" or any other specific alternative updates to the Comprehensive Plan or Codes.

We note that the alternatives presented here are not full alternatives, but rather aspects of planning that could appear in several different alternatives. For instance, a form-based code could be designed with different form treatments along road corridors or in areas near open space, and could include provisions for design standards in transition areas. ROSA 4 Rockland would like to see a draft comprehensive plan for Northeast Ramapo developed with aspects of all 9 of the alternatives here included. The No-Action alternative should show the maximum that could be developed now under the current comprehensive plan and zoning scheme. Three or four additional alternatives with different combinations of items 2 through 9 should be explored.

Before one can select such alternatives, a preferred, coherently described planning action should be developed. Alternatives in a future DGEIS could be designed once a preferred action is settled upon.

Please let us know if you have any comments and questions regarding this review.